METROPOLIS. ADVANCED ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AS ARENAS OF URBANITIES

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Workshop Instructors:
Architecture contributes to shaping the terrain of what is possible, it takes part in the ongoing disputes realities happen by, it occupies the front page of news outlets as an unavoidable player in the regulation of current modes of existence.

As a foundational component of the AAD Summer Semester, the Metropolis Seminar constitutes an 8-week program intended to explore, examine, and inquire about the ways in which architectural devices gain relevance in the making of contemporary societies. The program will look at the forms of urbanity and citizenship that emerge from the intersection of technologies, environments, modes of accountability, and forms of subject-making currently at stake. It will recognize architecture as a rich ecosystem of alternative, diverse, and often confronting positions.

The main goal of the seminar is to immerse post-professional AAD students in a critical environment in which they can rapidly be exposed to some of the controversies fueling contemporary architectural criticality, and to provide them with the possibility, references, and tools to develop complex analyses through which they will be capable of maximizing the critical reach of their work.

Classes are composed of weekly lecture and debate sessions and workshops.

The Lecture and Debate Sessions:

Each lecture will address one arena. Each arena brings to the seminar an ongoing discussion through which architectural, scientific, artistic, and activist practices interact with societies at large (or become societies themselves so to say) and a number of different positions that have emerged in the field of architectural design to intervene them. These are arenas in which collective challenges—such as climate change, interspecies relationships, the articulation of on-offline interaction, or the accountability of planetary infrastructures—participate in diverse modes of architectural practices. Each mobilizes alternative notions, premises, and propositions. In all cases, lectures will be structured through a significant number of existing cases of designed architectural devices.

Lectures will be followed by a debate in which the whole AAD class will participate. Students are given the opportunity each week to engage as a class by discussing together the role architecture plays in the making of contemporary societies.

Sessions will take place every Friday 4-7 pm, at Wood Auditorium. Attendance to all sessions is required.

Workshops:
Run in smaller groups, the workshops will prompt students to sequentially develop three 500 word essays analyzing the ways existing architectures—selected by each student out of a list of New York architectures proposed by the program—participate in both disciplinary and non-disciplinary controversies, as well as the way both spaces of polemic articulate connections, dependencies and transferences.

List of New York Architectures:

3. 432 Park Avenue. Rafael Vinoly Architects, Deborah Berke Partners and DBOX (2016).
17. Whole Foods Market, 7th Avenue, 24th St (2010).

The workshops will provide students with the tools to develop complex arguments on how the selected architecture participates in larger dialogs as a way to detect and describe in detail the forms of citizenship each architectural device promotes and which ones it confronts.

Students will submit a conclusive 1,500 words essay, that will be publicly presented in a special session on Friday, August 27th, and submitted in its final version on August 10th.
Sessions will take place every Friday 11-1 pm. 
Attendance to all sessions is required.

Writing Assignment:

The writing assignment of the METROPOLIS Seminar consist on 3 500-word pieces constructing a critical account of the tensions resulting of confronting:

- The personal experience of the student when visiting or inhabiting a building, selected by each student from a list of 30 NY-controversial-buildings provided by the seminar.
- The way it has been analyzed and discussed in architectural reviews and outlet, paying special attention to the controversies and divides it has/is part of and to the evolution of those controversies, and to the participation of the building in those controversies.
- The way it has been analyzed and discussed in non-architectural reviews and media, paying special attention to the controversies and divides it has/is part of and to the evolution of those controversies, and to the participation of the building in those controversies.

The students are encouraged to work following 5 principles:

1. A 'material perspective' (as it has been described in the tradition of Studies of Science and Technology). By 'material perspective' the seminar therefor means to give priority to the actual materiality of the architectural devices they deal with and not that much to their symbolic, poetical, metaphorical or phenomenological values.

2. The seminar will not give priority to the intentions of the architects, but rather to the design decisions the architectural devices exist by.

3. We won't look to architectural devices as fix objects, resulting from the solidification of specific architect's sensitivities, inclinations or preferences. We will rather analyze buildings as complex material trajectories, where initial design, accidents, multiple interferences, evolutions, mistakes gain agency in the capacity to inscribe their effects in the device.

4. We will focus on the way architectural devices have an agency of their own through their material specificity, and we will use controversies as opportunities where those forms of politics architectural designs perform constitute itself and render themselves trackable.

As a final assignment, the students will present a 1,500 word piece, where the main contributions to the field their previous pieces comprise will be articulated together. An extract from this piece will be presented in a public reading on July 27, and the final submission of the piece will be August 10.
Writing Workshops:

The program will be developed in collaboration with Columbia University Writing Center. The Writing Center will provide optional weekly workshops to all AAD students, assisting them in the development of their essays and providing tools for students to increase their writing skills.

Calendar:

Week 1.
Workshop by Susan Mendelsohn (Columbia University Writing Center)

Week 2.
Turning Infrastructures Accountable

Week 3.
(No Lecture)

Week 4.
Interspecies Contracts

Week 5.
Material Circulations

Week 6.
Changing Climates

Week 7.
On/Offline

Week 8.
For-/Non-Profit, Publicness, Welfare, Space and Capital, Commons

Week 9.
Public Reading of extracts of extracts from all final essays

August 10
3+1 Final Essay Due